

the *esprit* orchestra

ALEX PAUK
music director

STELLAR SERIES
1988/89

Saturday, October 29, 1988
Jane Mallett Theatre
St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts

ALTERED STATES

* THE INFERNAL MACHINE (1981)

Christopher Rouse

* THREE HALLUCINATIONS
for Orchestra (1981)

John Corigliano

Sacrifice
Hymn
Ritual

Intermission I

* THREE MOVEMENTS (1986)

Steve Reich

Intermission II

CORTEGE (1977)

R. Murray Schafer

Hutchison Shandro, Stage Director
Jerrard Smith, Costume Designer

* Canadian Premiere

Tonight's performance is being recorded for rebroadcast on TWO
NEW HOURS - CBC Stereo, in Toronto, 94.1 FM.

Please join us in the lobby, after the concert, to meet ESPRIT.

THE ESPRIT ORCHESTRA wishes to thank GEVALIA KAFFE for its
generous donation of coffee which will be served at the post-
concert reception.

PROGRAMME NOTES

THE INFERNAL MACHINE
(Canadian Premiere)

Christopher Rouse

Christopher Rouse's The Infernal Machine demonically pursues the idea of unbridled kinetic energy. While The Infernal Machine borrows its title from Jean Cocteau's play, the Oedipus myth, which Cocteau retells, has no bearing on the music. According to the composer: "It was my intent to write a brief orchestral showpiece inspired by the vision of a great self-sufficient machine eternally in motion to no particular purpose. But this 'infernal machine', though not specifically satanic, is nonetheless more than a little sinister. The music presents a perpetuum mobile wherein the giant sometimes whirs along in mercurially unconcerned fashion and at other times sputters or throws off slightly hellish sparks, occasionally grinding as it changes gears."

Composed in 1981, the music is to a large degree onomatopoeic - the clatter of clockwork is frequently depicted by the sandpaper blocks, ratchet, slap-stick, vibraslap and other unusual noise-makers included in the vast percussion battery, and near the end of the piece a quasi-electronic sound is introduced when the flautists and oboists exchange their instruments for finger-rubbed crystal glasses. Quite apart from its graphic references, however, The Infernal Machine functions smoothly as an abstract allegro, and in fact it was originally conceived as the scherzo section of a yet-to-be-completed three-movement work for orchestra. Rouse acknowledges a debt to Beethoven: measures 101-103 of The Infernal Machine quote the opening of the Presto movement of Beethoven's String Quartet in B-flat, op.130 - not for symbolic reasons, the composer says, and not merely to indicate the proper tempo, but simply because the deadline for completion of the work was nearing and the Beethoven passage was a convenient gap-filler.

Rouse was born in Baltimore on February 5, 1949. He attended Oberlin Conservatory and Cornell University, and his principal composition teachers were George Crumb, Karel Husa and Robert Palmer; since 1981 Rouse has been on the faculty of the Eastman School of Music. The Infernal Machine was completed on March 21, 1981; it was written for the University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra and first performed by that ensemble, under the direction of Gustav Meier, at the Evian Festival in France on May 9, 1981.

-James Wierzbicki

THREE HALLUCINATIONS
for Orchestra
(Canadian Premiere)

John Corigliano

Three Hallucinations for Orchestra is based upon music written for Ken Russell's film ALTERED STATES. The three pieces - Sacrifice, Hymn, Ritual - are interconnected in this score, as well as interrelated motivically and melodically. In the film, Mr. Russell devised several extended religious hallucinations, and the outer two movements of this work (Sacrifice and Ritual) are taken directly from the original film-score.

Sacrifice depicts the pagan slaying of a seven-eyed goat, superimposed against other images of death (primarily the death of the hero's father) and sensuality. The movement begins, however, with a slow introduction setting up a trance-like state. This is interrupted by the bleating sound of oboes playing in a highly primitive manner. The motto thus introduced - an ornamented and repeated single note (C) - figures not only in the development of this movement, but as the motivic "theme" of the final movement's dance. Other ingredients combine with the oboe motive - specifically, an interval relationship (the tritone or flatted-fifth) and a melodic fragment (of the hymn Rock of Ages). A final superimposition of all these ingredients culminates in a gigantic orchestra glissando which ends the movement.

The second movement, Hymn, develops and extends the previously heard fragment of Rock of Ages, fading in and out of a realistic version of the music into more hallucinatory visions. Blurred visions of choral "Amens" (plagal cadences) float like clouds around this music.

The last movement, Ritual, interrupts a series of these cadences with frenzied energy, and the momentum leads a savage ritual dance (in the film, the Hinch Indians' mushroom rite). The full-orchestral forces are augmented here by two sets of four timpani each and also by an expanded percussion section, and the work ends in a burst of cumulative energy.

-John Corigliano

John Corigliano (born February 16, 1938) grew up in a musical family - his father was violinist John Corigliano Sr., for many years concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic, and his mother was an accomplished pianist. He began to compose and play the piano at an early age. From 1955 to 1960 Corigliano studied composition in New York City, at Columbia College and at Manhattan School of Music. Since then he has produced orchestral pieces, choral works with orchestra, chamber music and songs, and his compositions have been performed by many of the leading orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, American Symphony and National Symphony.

- Phillip Ramey

THREE MOVEMENTS
(Canadian Premiere)

Steve Reich

Repetition is a significant factor in this work, tonal harmony is another, and so is virtuosity.

With his mind prepared by an education that included considerable contact with non-Western music, Steve Reich "discovered the process of letting two identical tape loops go gradually out of phase with each other while playing a recording he had made of the voice of a pentecostal preacher. It was the beginning of his work with slow changes, with gradual change, with seeming no-change.

This work represents Reich's development of a complex and colourful vocabulary within large and bold structures. In this work one can hear almost Baroque harmonies with the rhythmic vitality of Vivaldi (first movement) shifting to jazzy jagged rhythms. The second movement is more lyrical with percussion accompaniment reminiscent of Indonesian percussion. The third movement, which is fast again, moves into an almost latin rhythmic mode and even has a few bars hinting at Chinese harmonies near the end.

BIO

When Steve Reich was a conservatory student in the late 1950's and early 1960's, young composers had no choice but to conform to the prevailing serial doctrine. Inaudible mathematical permutation, atonality, and arrhythmic pointillism were the academic norm. Audiences were alienated by music that seemed to value structure more than sound, leaving composers increasingly isolated from their listening public. Steve Reich, devoted to the tonality and pulse of jazz and early Stravinsky, found himself estranged from the new-music establishment.


Today, almost thirty years later, this gloomy situation has changed radically, in no small part because of Reich himself. Without pandering to mass taste, Reich has brought the composer out of isolation and allowed him to regain a meaningful place in society. His large audience is not only a personal vindication, but serves as encouragement to a whole generation of younger composers. For Reich's music has created options that did not exist three decades ago. Rather than dogmatically applying a single technique, composers may now follow Reich's more eclectic path, one that has embraced not only aspects of the rationalism of serialism, but the structures, harmonies, and rhythms of non-Western and American vernacular music, especially jazz.

Reich's own musical development has exhibited a constant enlargement of vocabulary, yet he has never compromised his aesthetic beliefs. Although steady pulse, tonal centre, structural clarity, repetition, and a fascination with canons have always characterized his work, he has retained a youthful eagerness to broaden both means and scope. The once impersonal

process of phasing gave way, under the influence of African and Balinese music, to a counterpoint of polyrhythms; while a study of Hebrew scriptural cantillation led to an expansion of the melodic profile. In fact, Reich's works reveal a continuing incorporation of new elements into his existing language - from the harmonic cycle and kaleidoscopic colours of Music for Eighteen Musicians to the heightened emotional response evoked by the texts of Tehillim and The Desert Music.

Prediction is always risky, but it would seem certain that Reich will continue to make from his resources of Western Classical music, non-Western culture, and the American vernacular a rich and surprising syntheses. In whatever guise the synthesis appears, from the eminently portable, jazz-inflected 'Counterpoint' series to the refined scoring for large orchestra of The Desert Music and The Four Sections, it remains immediately recognizable as the reflection of a man who continues to delight his public without ever denying his roots.

-K. Robert Schwarz




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CORTEGE
(An Esprit Encore Performance)

R. Murray Schafer

The word "cortège" is usually associated with funeral marches, but in the case of Murray Schafer's Cortège, the word is used in its broader sense and refers to a slow, stately procession. The composer has created a surreal, dream-like ceremony which, through unusual movement of the orchestra in the hall, sets up new relationships amongst the players. Likewise, the relationship between the orchestra and audience is changed.

The role of the conductor is important in Cortège, and not only in the customary manner - he must also be a magician and a choreographer! He must organize the players' movements with great care and must ensure that they move in accordance with the intention of the piece which employs slow motion processions and pantomime as well as fast, synchronous movements and a counterpoint between sound and gesture. The conductor must be a master of legerdemain.

Cortège was commissioned and premiered in 1977 by the National Arts Centre Orchestra with Mario Bernardi as conductor. Since then it has received further performances in Europe and Canada. It was presented in December '87 by the Esprit Orchestra and appears again by popular request.

- R. Murray Schafer

Through his diverse musical and performance projects Mr. Schafer has revealed himself to be an outstanding creator with the ability to communicate important artistic, environmental and social messages. His talent comes to life not only in music but also in poetry, prose, education materials, graphic art, theatre and performance art. These art forms are often integrated in large works such as Princess of the Stars, Ra, and The Greatest Show on Earth which are situations where Schafer's artistic provocations have a fresh impact.

The appreciation of Mr. Schafer's work around the world, continues to grow and his list of prizes increases (Honneger Prize, France; Leger Prize, Canada; Glenn Gould Prize, International).

CONDUCTOR - Alex Pauk

Born and educated in Toronto, Alex Pauk undertook further studies in conducting in Japan. After settling in Vancouver and becoming a key figure in that city's new music scene, he returned to Toronto in 1979 to concentrate on composing concert and film music. Since founding THE ESPRIT ORCHESTRA in 1983, he has maintained a continuous creative output including orchestral works (Mirage and Echo Spirit Isle), chamber works (Water From the Moon and The Seventh Aura for electric strings), and a radiophonic montage (Nomad). During the current season Mr. Pauk will have major new piece, Cosmos, premiered by the Orchestre symphonique du Quebec.

STAGE DIRECTOR - Hutchison Shandro

Mr. Shandro is a freelance actor/director/teacher who has worked at the majority of premiere theatres and training centres in Canada. For THE ESPRIT ORCHESTRA he devised and performed in the prologue for Frank Zappa's The Perfect Stranger. This season Mr. Shandro directed the opening production for Toronto's Theatre Plus.

COSTUME DESIGNER - Jerrard Smith

Mr. Smith has been a long-time collaborator on R. Murray Schafer's projects, most notably - Princess of the Stars, Ra, and The Greatest Show on Earth. His work for the Desrosiers Dance Company's Blue Snake and Ultracity is highly recognized.

WHAT ARE FRIENDS FOR?

Your help is needed. Ticket sales and other earned income meet less than half of the Orchestra's annual budget.

To help reach our annual funding goal, we have an individual donor program, called FRIENDS OF THE ESPRIT ORCHESTRA. Your membership as a FRIEND OF THE ESPRIT ORCHESTRA is a vital part of our fundraising campaign.

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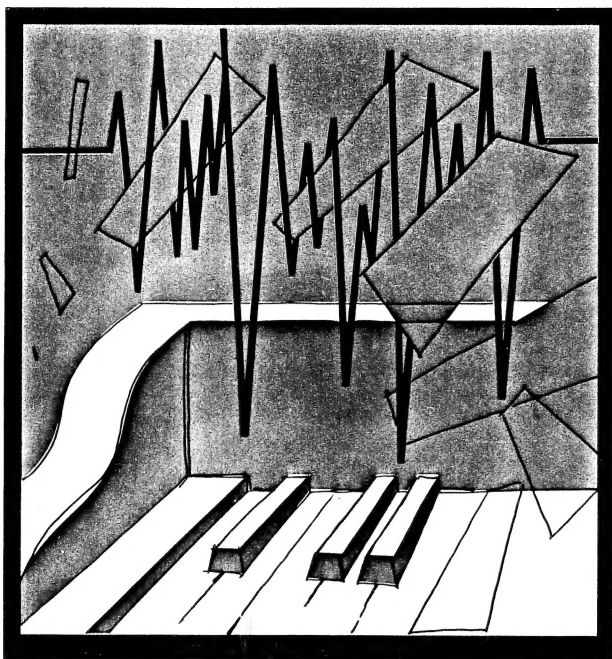
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